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New perinatal unit opening at Kelowna General Hospital

KELOWNA – A new perinatal unit where families will welcome their newborn babies into the world was celebrated Thursday at Kelowna General Hospital.

“Having a baby is one of life’s most joyous, and most stressful, moments,” said Premier Christy Clark, MLA for Westside-Kelowna. “This new unit will provide moms and loved ones with a state-of-the-art facility and soothing atmosphere in which to enjoy the start of a new life together.”

The new perinatal unit opens to patients on March 6. It is located on the fourth floor of the recently opened Interior Heart and Surgical Centre and replaces the hospital’s existing labour and delivery unit.

“This new unit will support new families by offering patient-centered care in a personalized, wrap-around setting,” said Health Minister Terry Lake. “Importantly, the unit will offer private, quiet and enhanced care for new mothers and their babies and support families in this growing region at a very special time in their lives.”

“The unit’s design certainly takes into account the need for comfort,” said Steve Thomson, MLA for Kelowna-Mission. “This is a patient and family-centred care environment with private and semi-private rooms, and family kitchen areas that create a warm atmosphere and fosters a sense of calm and well-being for both moms and babies.”

The new perinatal unit features expanded patient and clinical care space including five private labour and delivery rooms, and nine private and four semi-private postpartum rooms. It is also home to a new neonatal intensive care unit with the capacity to support up to 20 babies. The new unit will allow newborns, expectant mothers and their families to remain closer to home more often.

“After seeing the new perinatal unit firsthand, I know this is a place where the 1,600 babies born at Kelowna General Hospital every year will get the best start to life,” said Norm Letnick, MLA for Kelowna-Lake Country. “A modern neonatal intensive care unit with central monitoring, and areas for stabilization, transition and high needs babies will support parents whose newborns need a little extra help.”

In addition to modernizing patient areas, the new perinatal unit provides an excellent working environment for health-care providers who were directly involved in the design of the unit. This included the addition of a new operating room centrally located on the unit and dedicated to scheduled Caesarian section and multiple birth deliveries. In addition, with the new unit located within the Interior Heart and Surgical Centre, physicians can provide urgent Caesarean section deliveries in one of its 15 new operating rooms.

“On behalf of everyone at Interior Health and especially the health-care providers at Kelowna General Hospital, I would like to thank the provincial government and our partners at the Central Okanagan Regional Hospital District and the Kelowna General Hospital Foundation,” said Erwin Malzer, Interior Health Board Chair. “Together, we are ensuring quality care and a nurturing environment for moms and babies, and a modern, healthy workplace for our employees.”

The perinatal unit is included within the \$381-million budget for the new Interior Heart & Surgical Centre. The Central Okanagan Regional Hospital District provided the \$18-million capital cost of the unit and the Kelowna General Hospital Foundation has committed \$3-million for new state-of-the-art equipment and support funding.

“We know that the new unit is much needed and will be well used by growing families,” says Gail Given, Chair of Central Okanagan Regional Hospital District. “It just made sense to go ahead and fully fund the construction of the fourth floor while the Interior Heart and Surgical Centre was being built, rather than waiting and adding the new unit sometime in the future.”

“Our community is extremely proud of KGH and their help is critical to make it what it is today. The KGH Foundation is extremely grateful for the support our community is providing to our most vulnerable patients through our Giving Giggles Campaign,” said Doug Rankmore, Chief Executive Officer, Kelowna General Hospital Foundation. “Thanks to those who give to support the hospital we will be able to provide families, and the nurses and physicians providing care, the most up to date facility possible.”

During Thursday’s celebration, guests had the opportunity to tour the new unit. This included Fiona Patterson who is looking forward to the arrival of her first child in March.

“As first-time expectant parents, my husband and I were both thrilled upon touring the new perinatal unit at Kelowna General Hospital,” said Fiona Patterson, first-time expectant mom. “The energy of this new birth space is one that promotes relaxation and is really attuned to the needs of the whole family. The natural light and aesthetics are so soothing, and we were impressed with the upgraded equipment; it’s comforting to know that maternity care in Kelowna is a priority.